Ecclesiam Suam: Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of a Prophetic Document
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Acknowledgement

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you my reflections on the 60th anniversary of the publication of *Ecclesiam Suam.*

First Peoples First: I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land where we are gathered, the Wangal people of the Eora Nation. I acknowledge their elders, past, present, and emerging. I commit to walk with them the paths of respect, reconciliation, and recognition.

Why Ecclesiam Suam Matters

On 11 May this year, I was deeply shocked to realise that I had not adverted to the 60th anniversary of *Ecclesiam Suam* on 6 August and had not planned any commemoration. Why was it such a profound shock? Why does *Ecclesiam Suam* matter?

- I have been involved in interreligious dialogue in one form or another for more than 45 years; it is why I and other Columbans went to Pakistan in 1979; it shaped my missionary engagements there over 20 years; it led me to do postgraduate studies in Arabic and Islam in Rome in the mid-80s; it has flowered in my fulltime interfaith apostolate here in Sydney for the past 24 years – and it was *Ecclesiam Suam* that introduced interreligious dialogue to the Catholic Church, and to me. *Ecclesiam Suam* matters deeply to me because it profoundly impacted and transformed my life.
- On the international church level, *Ecclesiam Suam* shaped Vatican II, which has been roiling the church for the past nearly 60 years.
- I believe that *Ecclesiam Suam* is also a prophetic document which laid the foundations for much of what Pope Francis is doing in the church today.
- On Saturday 10 August 2024, Bishop Vincent launched the "Diocese of Parramatta's Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church". I believe that *Ecclesiam Suam* is a blueprint for a diocesan pastoral plan, for a parish pastoral plan, and for a personal pastoral plan.

Hence, for personal, ecclesial, papal, and pastoral reasons, the 60th anniversary of *Ecclesiam Suam* is worth celebrating.

While shocked that I nearly missed it, I am scandalised that, to my knowledge, no other church agency, in Australia or internationally, has celebrated the 60th anniversary of this significant, prophetic, magisterial, programmatic document.

I thank the Diocese of Parramatta and the Catholic Institute of Sydney for assuaging my guilt over my earlier negligence regarding the 60th anniversary of *Ecclesiam Suam* by agreeing to co-host talks to mark this significant event, and I congratulate you for being the handful of Catholics in the world who are celebrating the anniversary of this important document!

Other Anniversaries

And there are other related anniversaries:

- On a poignant note, 6 August is the death anniversary of Pope Paul VI, who died in 1978.[1]
- 19 May 2024 was the 60th anniversary of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, which has gone through various iterations:
    - Created by Pope Paul VI in 1964 as the Secretariate for Non-Christians;
    - Re-named the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue by Pope John Paul II on 12 June 1988;
    - Joined by Pope Benedict XVI with the Pontifical Council for Culture under the presidency of Cardinal Paul Poupard in 2006;
    - Restored to independence by Pope Benedict under the presidency of Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran a year later;
    - Re-named the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue by Pope Francis on 19 March 2022.
- 10 June 2024 was the 40th anniversary of *The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission*, known by the abbreviated title, *Dialogue and Mission,* published 20 years after the creation of the Secretariat.

  Incidentally, even though the document names interreligious dialogue as one of 'the principal elements of mission' (DM, 13), the name of the document—*Dialogue and Mission*—and the structure of the document—a section on "mission", a section on "dialogue", and a section on "dialogue and mission"—give the wrong impression that "dialogue" is one activity and "mission" another completely separate activity – as if my life's work in interreligious dialogue was not part of mission!

  It was the 1991 document, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, published jointly by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples, that by clearly defining terms and using them consistently, definitively established dialogue as "one of the integral elements of the Church's evangelising mission" (DP, 6, 9, 38).

  To mark the 40th anniversary of *Dialogue and Mission, t*he Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations is happy to gift each of you with a copy.

- 28 October next year is the 60th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, Vatican II's *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*.

[1] Unusually, his liturgical feast was celebrated on the date of his birth, 26 September, until 2019 when it was changed to the date of his priestly ordination, 29 May. Pope Francis canonised him on 14 October 2018.

And there are 60th anniversaries for each of the documents of the Second Vatican Council —2 last year, 3 in November this year, and 11 late next year.

- *Inter Mirifica*, Social Communications, 4 December 1963
- *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Liturgy, 4 December 1963
- *Lumen Gentium*, Church, 21 November 1964
- *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, Eastern Rite Churches, 21 November 1964
- *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Ecumenism, 21 November 1964
- *Christus Dominus*, Bishops, 28 October 1965
- *Gravissimums Educationis*, Christian Education, 28 October 1965
- *Nostra Aetate,* Non-Christian Religions, 28 October 1965
- *Optatam Totius*, Priestly Training, 28 October 1965
- *Perfectae Caritatis*, Religious Life, 28 October 1965
- *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Laity, 18 November 1965
- *Dei Verbum*, Revelation, 18 November 1965
- *Ad Gentes*, Mission, 7 December 1965
- *Dignitatis Humanae*, Religious Freedom, 7 December 1965
- *Gaudium et Spes*, Church in Modern World, 7 December 1965
- *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 7 December 1965

PRELIMINARY COMMENTS

A couple of preliminary comments on *Ecclesiam Suam.*

First, the author.

Ecclesiam Suam was written by Pope Paul VI. The first encyclical of many popes is often their personal charter, their signature document, their magisterial statement, the policy statement for their papacy. I think of Pope John Paul II's christocentricism in *Redemptor Hominis*, and Pope Francis' missionary vision in *Evangelii Gaudium.* In his first encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*, Pope Paul VI spells out his vision of the church.

Pope Paul VI was:

- committed to complete, and then to implement, the Second Vatican Council which had been called by his predecessor, Pope John XXIII
- the first pope ever to fly in an aeroplane
- the first pope in centuries to visit Jerusalem
- the first pope ever to visit Asia, Oceania, and the Americas
- tragically, he is perhaps most remembered for the debacle over *Humanae Vitae* (1968)
- a pioneer, a prophet, a humanist, a shepherd who gave his life in service to the church he loved dearly
- and was canonised by Pope Francis on 14 October 2018.

Now the document itself:

At first glance, *Ecclesiam Suam* is difficult to read. Pope Paul VI uses the royal plural of court language. For example:

> It will not, therefore, come as a surprise when We acknowledge that Our own thoughts as We sit down to write this first encyclical of Our sovereign pontificate—to which God in his

> inscrutable designs has called Us—are naturally and inevitably concerned with the loving and reverent consideration of the subject of Holy Church. (ES, 2)

This florid, courtly style grates against our Australian egalitarian spirit. It comes across as ingratiating.

Secondly, as was the custom of the time (which continues in the Vatican till today), the document uses gendered language, for example, the opening is addressed:

> *… to all men of good will.*

And begins:

> *Venerable Brethren and Dearest Sons …* (ES, 1)

There is no reference to the women, sisters, and daughters, who make up half of "His Church" and are its most active protagonists?!

However, when we get past these linguistic hurdles, there are sentences that are beautifully crafted, and the deep humanism of Pope Paul VI shines through. I will give just one example:

> … before speaking, we must take great care to listen not only to what [people] say, but more especially to what they have it in their hearts to say. Only then will we understand them and respect them, and even, as far as possible, agree with them. (ES, 87)

OVERVIEW OF THE ENCYCLICAL

Rather than attempt to summarise the encyclical, I will highlight key themes and link them to Vatican II, to Pope Francis, and to dialogue. Hopefully, this will give you a 'taste' of its rich fare and contemporary relevance so that you might go home and read the encyclical for yourself.

By way of introduction, here is a brief overview of the encyclical:

- The pope's theme is "His [i.e. Christ's] Church", which gives the Latin title of the encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam* (commonly named in English "Paths of the Church") (1 – 2)
- He states his intention – that the church and the world "get to know and love one another" (3 – 5)
- He states what he does not intend, that is, to innovate, or to pre-empt the deliberations of the Council (6 – 7)
- He introduces the 3 principal policies which are to guide his pontificate (8 – 17), each of which is spelled out in detail:
    - Deeper self-knowledge = Self-Awareness (18 – 40)
    - Struggle for Renewal = The Renewal (41 – 57)
    - Relations with the world = The Dialogue (58 – 115)
- He concludes with an Encouragement (116 – 119)

AIM AND PURPOSE OF THE ENCYCLICAL

The aim of the encyclical is clearly stated:

> The aim of this encyclical will be to demonstrate with increasing clarity how vital it is for the world, and how greatly desired by the Catholic Church, that **the two should meet together, and get to know and love one another.** (ES, 3)

Later in the encyclical, writing of the church's and his attitude towards the world, Paul VI writes:

> … We will approach [the world] with **reverence, persistence, and love**, in an effort to get to know it and to offer it the gifts of truth and grace of which God has made Us custodian. (ES, 69)

Link to Pope Francis

This open and positive attitude towards the world reminds me of the 2013 pre-conclave meetings in which cardinals gave brief 'interventions'. One cardinal said:

> … The Church is called **to come out of herself** and to **go to the peripheries**, not only geographically, but also the existential peripheries: ….
>
> When the Church does not **come out of herself** to evangelize, she becomes self-referential and then gets sick …
>
> In Revelation, Jesus says that he is at the door and knocks [Rev. 3:20]. Obviously, the text refers to his knocking from the outside in order to enter, but I think about **the times in which Jesus knocks from within so that we will let him come out.** The self-referential Church keeps Jesus Christ within herself and does not let him out …[2]

The speaker who turned this traditional Catholic devotional image inside-out was Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, whom his peers then elected pope; and he has been delightfully disrupting the church ever since!

Pope Francis and the missionary Church

The church not being self-referential but "going out" to the world has become a key theme of Pope Francis' papacy. For example, in the 2013 Pentecost Vigil, he returns to the same image:

> Go out, go out! Think of what the Book of Revelation says as well. It says something beautiful: that Jesus stands at the door and knocks, knocks to be let into our heart (cf. Rev 3:20). This is the meaning of the Book of Revelation. But ask yourselves this question: **how often is Jesus inside and knocking at the door to be let out, to come out?** And we do not let him out because of our own need for security, because so often we are locked into ephemeral structures that serve solely to make us slaves and not free children of God.[3]

And in *Fratelli Tutti*,

> Let us **seek out others** and **embrace the world as it is**, without fear of pain or a sense of inadequacy, because there we will discover all the goodness that God has planted in human hearts. (FT, 78)[4]

In "going out to the world", Pope Paul VI and Pope Francis are in sync!

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[2] https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/the-4-minute-speech-that-got-pope-francis-elected

[3] https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/may/documents/papa-francesco_20130518_veglia-pentecoste.html

[4] https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html

Translation

One final point on 'going out' to the world. In paragraph 65 the document states:

> The Church must enter into dialogue with the world in which it lives. It has something to say, a message to give, a communication to make. (ES, 65)

The cultural warriors of our time take up this 'ecclesial' task with solemn zeal and moral earnestness. However, when they speak, they sound dogmatic and moralistic. They are often censorious, finger-wagging, admonishing. They do not accept the world as it is but seek to change it. They do not "approach [the world] with reverence, persistence, and love" (ES, 69), as Pope Paul VI promised, but reproach it. Is there a contradiction here? It would seem so.

The apparent inconsistency is resolved by correcting an error in translation – I am indebted to Dan Madigan SJ for bringing this to our attention.[5] The original Italian text of that second sentence reads:

> *La Chiesa si fa parola;*
> *la Chiesa si fa messaggio;*
> *la Chiesa si fa colloquio.* (ES, 67)

It is not the church having "something to say, a message to give, a communication to make", which the cultural warriors among us weaponise in their war on the world! The literal translation is:

> The Church makes itself word;
> the Church makes itself message;
> the Church makes itself conversation.

It is not about the church changing the world! It is about the church first changing itself! The church is not talking-down to a lesser. It *becomes* a communication between equals. The church is not a pre-recorded message, handed down unchanged from the past. It *becomes* a living messenger for the present. The church is not a one-way megaphone. It *becomes* a mutual encounter. The church is not a monologue. It *becomes a* dialogue. The church does not harangue, scold, or berate. It shows respect, openness, and positive regard. This humble, listening, merciful style of the church's relation to the world is detailed in the third section of the encyclical.

I. SELF-AWARENESS (18 – 40)

The first of Paul VI's principal policies is self-awareness, self-knowledge, or identity. He adverts to the upheavals of the changing modern world, which is impacting the church. He draws on the recent tradition of self-examination that is underway, the contributions of previous councils, previous popes, and contemporary scholars. He urges a re-discovery of our "vital bond of union with Christ" (ES, 35) and our belonging to Christ's Mystical Body, tracing its origins to our baptism, urging us to become aware of its significance.

Pope Paul VI on Baptism

> Those who are baptized and by this means incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body, His Church, **must attach the greatest importance to this event.** They **must be acutely aware** of being raised to a higher status, of being reborn to a supernatural life, there to experience the happiness of being God's adopted sons [and daughters], the special dignity of being Christ's brothers [and sisters], the blessedness, the grace and the joy of the indwelling Holy Spirit. ….

[5] Daniel A Madigan, "Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Difficult Times," *Salaam* 28, no. 4 (October 2007).

…. To be a Christian, to have received holy Baptism, must not be looked upon as something of negligible importance. It must be something **which thrills the baptized person to the very core of his [or her] being.** [They] must look upon it with the eyes of the Christians of the early Church, as an "illumination" which draws down upon [their] soul the life-giving radiance of divine truth, opens heaven to [them], and sheds upon this mortal life that light which enables [them] to walk as a child of the light toward the vision of God, the wellspring of eternal happiness. (ES, 39)

Pope Francis on Baptism

Before I treat the defining importance of baptism according to Pope Francis, I will ask you a question: How many of you know the date of your baptism? How many of you celebrate your baptism day?[6]

On the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, it has become custom for the pope to baptise some infants. Pope Francis takes the opportunity to ask the congregation if they know the date of their baptism … and hardly anyone does!

The pope then explains that baptism brings about the most radical and definitive change in a person's life. The baptised becomes forever a child of the Father, a member of the body of Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis encourages us to know the date and celebrate it as a birthday, for it is the dawning of salvation, the moment we are born into eternal life.[7] Nothing that happens to us afterwards has such dramatic and eternal consequences.

Baptism as Antidote for Clericalism

Pope Francis has been using baptism as an antidote for the scourge of clericalism.

Lumen Gentium states:

> Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ. (LG, 10)

It is baptism that immerses us all in that one priesthood of Christ. Ordination is simply a modality of living out the one baptismal vocation that all Christians share equally, each in their own way.

Pope Paul VI and Pope Francis are in sync regarding baptism as the source and foundation of Christian identity and equality.

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[6] Incidentally, I didn't know my baptism date either till last year. I was to baptise a great-niece. Knowing that I would talk about Pope Francis's insistence on the importance of baptism, I researched and found my baptism date.

[7] See https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2021/09/08/pope-francis-general-audience-baptism-241354; https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/253288/pope-francis-celebrate-the-date-of-your-baptism-like-a-birthday; https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/angelus/2024/documents/20240107-angelus.html;

Pope Francis and Identity

Just as Pope Paul VI identified "identity" as foundational for his reflection on the church, Pope Francis makes identity foundational for engaging in interreligious dialogue. In his 2017 address at Al-Azhar University, he enunciated 3 principles:

1. ***The duty to respect one's own identity and that of others*, because true dialogue cannot be built on ambiguity or a willingness to sacrifice some good for the sake of pleasing others.**
2. ***The courage to accept differences***, because those who are different, either culturally or religiously, should not be seen or treated as enemies, but rather welcomed as fellow-travellers, in the genuine conviction that the good of each resides in the good of all.
3. ***Sincerity of intentions*,** because dialogue, as an authentic expression of our humanity, is not a strategy for achieving specific goals, but rather a path to truth, one that deserves to be undertaken patiently, in order to transform competition into cooperation.[8]

And in *Querida Amazonia*:

> **Identity and dialogue are not enemies.** Our own cultural identity is strengthened and enriched as a result of dialogue with those unlike ourselves. Nor is our authentic identity preserved by an impoverished isolation. (QA, 37)

Regarding such dialogue, St Columban said, "A life unlike your own can become your teacher." In fact, it is the only thing that can ever teach us. If we associate only with kindred minds and kindred hearts, we will never learn anything. It will be a dreary monologue of the same thoughts, the same ideas, the same formulae. It is only when we dialogue with the "other" that we can learn something new.

And Pope Francis in *Querida Amazonia* again:

> … we believers need to find occasions to speak to one another and to act together for the common good and the promotion of the poor. This has nothing to do with watering down or concealing our deepest convictions when we encounter others who think differently than ourselves. If we believe that the Holy Spirit can work amid differences, then we will try to let ourselves be enriched by that insight, while embracing it from the core of our own convictions and our own identity. For the deeper, stronger and richer that identity is, the more we will be capable of enriching others with our own proper contribution. (QA, 106)

I note that in this quote there is both "receiving from the other" and "giving to the other".

II. THE RENEWAL (41 – 57)

Pope Paul VI's second principal priority is The Renewal.

Having put before us the ideal of what the church is called to be, Pope Paul VI then challenges the church to live up to its vocation through renewal and reform. He looks to the Council for guidance. The renewal is not fashioning something entirely new; nor reducing the church to primitive forms. It is neither over-adapting to the novelties of the modern world; nor clinging to outmoded forms of the past. It is, in Pope John XXIII's word, "*aggiornamento*". It is living the Christian life to the full in today's world. Paul VI highlights the spirit of poverty (ES, 54 – 55) and the supremacy of charity (ES,

[8] https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2017/april/documents/papa-francesco_20170428_egitto-conferenza-pace.html.

56). His text on renewal is a precursor to the "New Evangelisation" that was taken up later by Pope John Paul II.

Pope Francis also treats renewal. However, recognising "that today we are not living in an era of change but rather a change of era",[9] he eschews backward-looking 'restorationist' interpretations of the new evangelisation for a 'transformative' forward-looking alternative:

> I dream of a "missionary option", that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation. (EG, 27)

For the source of this church renewal, he turns to *Ecclesiam Suam*:

> Paul VI invited us to deepen the call to renewal and to make it clear that renewal does not only concern individuals but the entire Church. Let us return to a memorable text which continues to challenge us. "The Church must look with penetrating eyes within herself, ponder the mystery of her own being… This vivid and lively self-awareness inevitably leads to a comparison between the ideal image of the Church as Christ envisaged her and loved her as his holy and spotless bride (cf. Eph 5:27), and the actual image which the Church presents to the world today ..." (ES, 9 - 11) (EG, 26)

Pope Paul VI and Pope Francis are in sync when it comes to the renewal of the church.

III. THE DIALOGUE (58-116)

Pope Paul VI's third principal priority is dialogue. This is the main focus of *Ecclesiam Suam.* It takes up half of the document. The word is used 81 times. Pope Paul VI explains its origins. It begins with God and is an invitation to salvation:

> Indeed, the whole history of [human] salvation is one long, varied dialogue, which marvellously begins with God and which He prolongs with [people] in so many different ways. (ES, 70)

Dialogue is motivated by love, reaches all, requires persistence, adapts to circumstances, requires clarity, meekness, confidence, and prudence. It is multiform. It "thrives on friendship, and most especially on service" (ES, 67). All this and more are detailed in this section.

Concentric Circles

In an inspired image which will have profound impact on Vatican II, Pope Paul VI envisages a series of concentric circles.

- The first is all humankind (ES, 97 - 106).
- The second is worshippers of the One God (ES, 107 – 108), that is, believers in the world's religions and faith traditions.
- The third is all Christians (ES, 109 – 112).
- And the fourth is all Catholics (ES, 113 – 115).

[9] https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco_20151110_firenze-convegno-chiesa-italiana.html

What is crucial is that Pope Paul envisages each of these circles as an arena for dialogue.

Thus, we have:

- Religious-secular dialogue
- Interreligious dialogue
- Ecumenical dialogue
- Intra-religious dialogue

Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium*: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, takes up this same schema, but in reverse order:

> All are called to this catholic unity of the people of God which prefigures and promotes universal peace. And to it belong, or are related in different ways: the catholic faithful, others who believe in Christ, and finally all of humankind, called by God's grace to salvation. (LG, 12)

The subsequent paragraphs treat in more detail:

- the catholic faithful (LG, 14)
- all the baptised i.e. all Christians (LG,15)
- believers in other world religions (Judaism, Islam, God-seekers) (LG, 16)
- those who do not know God but strive to lead a good life (LG, 16)

The same schema and the same order are also found in paragraph 92 of *Gaudium et* Spes: The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern Word.

1. **Fifth Circle**

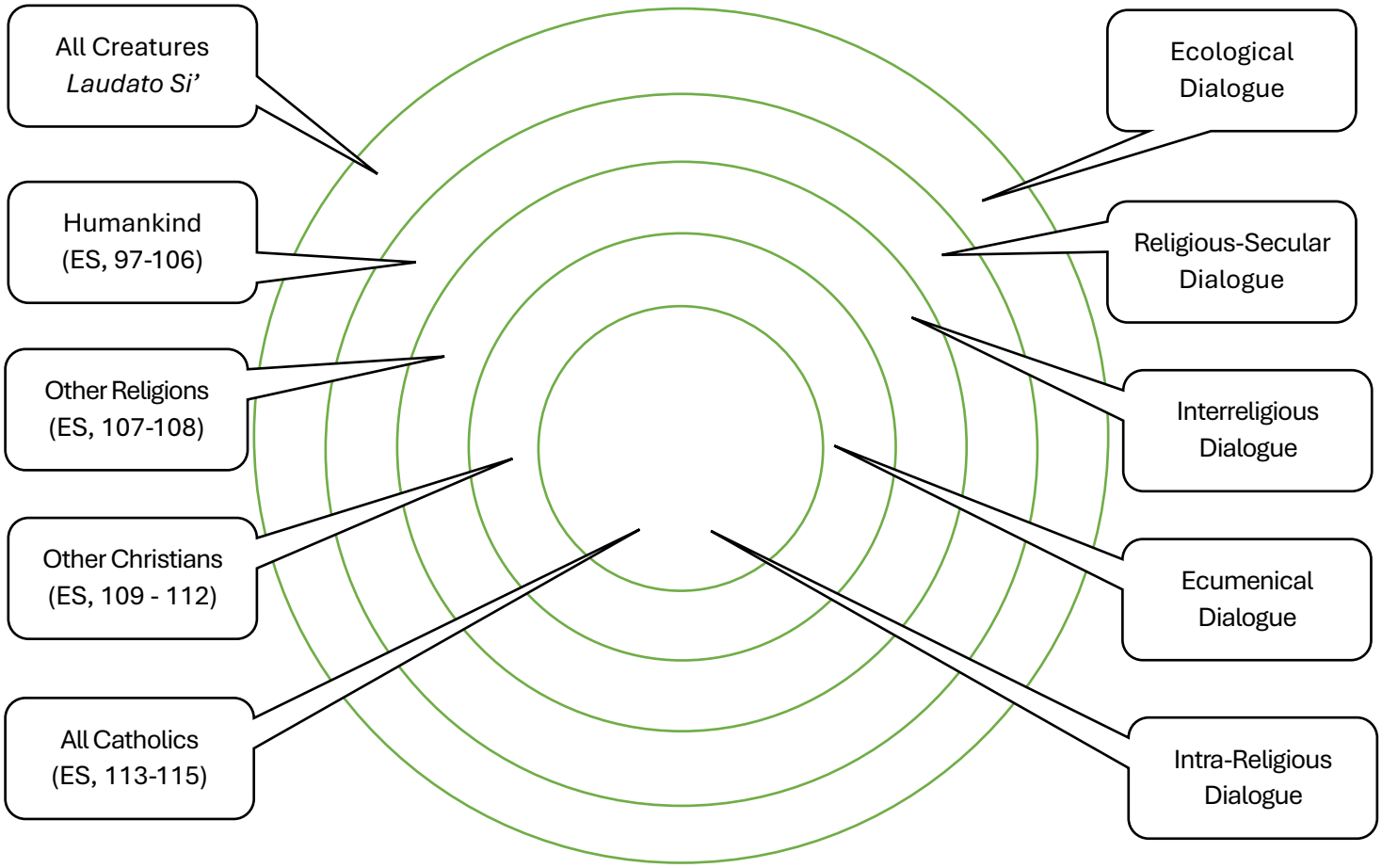
The first point I want to make about Pope Paul VI's schema of four concentric circles is that Pope Francis has added something new. In his 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis invites us to be open to all creatures:

> The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God. … (LS, 84)
>
> God has written a precious book, "whose letters are the multitude of created things present in the universe". (LS, 85)
>
> … "for the believer, to contemplate creation is to hear a message, to listen to a paradoxical and silent voice". (LS, 85)

In other words, he has added a fifth circle, that of all things (animals, birds, all creatures).[10]

And correspondingly, he has added "ecological dialogue".

[10] The Parliament of the World's Religions did the same when in 2018 it added to its 1993 signature document, "Towards a Global Ethic", the "The Fifth Directive: Commitment to a Culture of Sustainability and Care for the Earth". See https://parliamentofreligions.org/globalethic/.



2. Missionary Plan: Breathing In and Breathing Out

The second point I want to make concerns the order of the concentric circles. One commentator opined that Pope Paul VI's vision is "ecclesiocentric", that everything converges on the Catholic Church. This is clearly contrary to the aim of *Ecclesiam Suam* that we saw earlier, of going out to the world, and it confuses a static image with a living reality.

As a preliminary for explaining this, I invite you to do a simple exercise. It is a straightforward breathing exercise, so involves no health risk, but if you have respiratory or coronary issues, please do NOT join in.

> Sit up straight.
>
> Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. (No problem.) Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe out. Breathe out. Breathe out. Breathe out. Breathe out.
>
> OK, let's change it.
>
> Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe in. Breathe in. Breathe in. Breathe in. Breathe in. Breathe in.

Now back to Pope Paul VI's concentric circles. They are not just static images. They represent living people: Catholics, other Christians, believers in other world religions, and believers in other worldviews. And like all people, Catholics breathe in *and* they breathe out.

- If they only breathe out, they will literally 'expire', as we experienced in our exercise.
- And if they only breathe in, they will 'suffocate', as we also experienced in our exercise.
- They must breathe in **AND** breathe out.

The members of the church must **reach out** to other Catholics, to other Christians, to believers in other religions, to believers in other worldviews, to all things - to listen, to learn, to dialogue, to show Christ's mercy and kindness and forgiveness, to bestow the blessings they have received in Christ, even as Jesus Christ breathed on his disciples (c.f. Jn 20:22).

The members of the church must **gather** in from other Catholics, from other Christians, from believers in other religions, from believers in other world views, from all things, the riches and grace and blessings that God has bestowed on those others, that Catholics may be enriched and find new life and new insights into God's presence and action.

At the launch of the Diocese of Parramatta's Pastoral Plan, Rev Dr Ormond Rush spoke of these dual dynamics in terms of "mission *ad extra*" and "mission *ad intra*", reaching out, and drawing in. Incidentally, Bishop Tim Norton made the same point in a talk in Brisbane just the other week.[11]

If the members of the church only ever engage in reaching out *ad extra*, busy about the apostolate, engaging in dialogue with others and the world, working for justice, building the Kingdom, and never take time to "come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while" (Mk 6:31), to savour the fruits of their endeavours, to nourish themselves on what they learned in their apostolic outreach, then they will exhaust themselves and die.

If the members of the church only ever engage in gathering in to themselves *ad intra*, pastoring the faithful, filling the pews, defending the faith, shoring up the church, censoring others' immorality, they will shrink, ossify, become isolated and self-referential, reiterating the same formulae, and become anaemic, sickly, and wither.

To live to the full as God intends, the church must do both: breathe in AND breathe out; mission *ad extra* AND mission *ad intra.*

Thus, Pope Paul VI's schema of concentric circles (with Pope Francis' addition) is the blueprint for a truly "missionary' pastoral plan, one that goes out to others and to the world and harvests its fruits:

- Dialogue with other Catholics, or in Greek, *koinonia*, fellowship.
- Dialogue with other Christians – ecumenism
- Dialogue with believers from other religions and faith traditions – interreligious/interfaith dialogue
- Dialogue with believes in other world views – religious-secular dialogue, the dialogue between faith and reason
- Dialogue with the environment – forging a caring and universal belonging in our common home

[11] https://catholicleader.com.au/life/bishop-norton-urges-catholics-to-bring-gods-mission-to-the-excluded/.

3. Synodality

The third point I want to make is that Paul VI's schema of concentric circles is the basis for the style and methodology to which Pope Francis has been calling the church, synodality, "walking the one path" with other Catholics, with other Christians – but not just with the baptised, as is the case with most of what is written on synodality. Paul VI's schema clearly illustrates that Catholics must also "walk the one path" with believers in other religions, with believers in secular worldviews, with all creatures – listening, learning, sharing, supporting one another on our common pilgrim journey to the fulness of truth and goodness in God.

4. Fraternity

The fourth point I want to make is that Paul VI's schema of concentric circles is the basis for another theme to which Pope Francis has been calling the church, universal fraternity/sorority, universal solidarity, as detailed in *Fratelli Tutti*.

> Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travellers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all. (FT, 8)

Conclusion

Ecclesiam Suam is a prophetic document.

- It introduced dialogue into the church's magisterium.
- It highlights the missionary dimension of going out to the world
- It profoundly shaped Vatican II.
- It laid the foundations for Pope Francis's insistence on:
    - the equality of all the baptised
    - the missionary transformation of the whole church
    - synodality as the way of the church in the 3rd millennium, and
    - universal fraternity.
- It provides a truly 'missionary' blueprint for pastoral planning.

Its 60th anniversary is an occasion for renewed appropriation, gratitude, and celebration.

Thank you.